

help to document the population trends in this area near Anniesland where she identified some nests.

References

Blackman, S. (2001). *Life's a Breeze*. BBC Wildlife 19 no. 7: 17, citing Bäckman & Alerstam. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London Series B* 268: 1081-7.
Bromhall, D. (1980). *Devil Birds, The Life of the Swift*. Hutchinson.

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URBAN FOXES IN HYNDLAND, GLASGOW
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During the time we have lived here (since 1970) or in nearby Lorraine Rd. (1954-70) we saw no fox until the severe winter of 1996 when we saw a pair in the front garden at 7.30 am on January 30th. A neighbour reported seeing two "wolves" a few days before. Having prospected the territory, the foxes adopted it and established a nearby den. Since then they have been resident, breeding, scavenging and interacting with us humans, with cats, squirrels & magpies. Casual observations have made us familiar with the favoured routes and behaviour of the foxes, varying as generations succeeded one another. We have made use of their scavenging for eco-friendly disposal of kitchen scraps, left-over foods (bonanzas around Christmas!) sometimes supplemented by cat-food, dog-food or other items. Pasta & potatoes are ignored, but biscuits, peanuts & cake are readily accepted, and we understand that the foxes enjoyed packet dates put out by a nearby neighbour. This sophisticated town food seems to suit them well - their condition has remained splendid, contrasting with the scrawny foxes seen around Glasgow Airport by Riccardo Lazzarini. Their numbers remained fairly stable with surviving litters of one to three.

Sightings recorded in Table 1 were not from specific, planned observations but from casual sightings from windows or from ground level (garden, car parking, garage), sometimes provoked by hearing the characteristic harsh, high-pitched barking. Peak sightings were in June > July > September. Some encounters were close-range with foxes who showed little fear but much curiosity about our actions and the chance that we might have food. One fox tried to snatch a plastic bag of cake crumbs I was putting out one evening for birds next day. The plastic slipped from his jaws. I tossed him a couple of fragments to show it would not interest him (I thought) but they were gobbled with pleasure - however, I have not taken to buying cake for foxes! On average we put out food scraps, often supplemented with a few dog or cat biscuits, which vanish each night - even occasional quite large bones, which disappear completely - not gnawed as playthings as a dog might do.

Table 1: Times seen/Number seen of foxes, by quarter

Year	Jan- March	April- June	July- Sept.	Oct.- Dec.	Notes
1996	2 / 2	25 / 30	26 / 32	5 / 3+	Mobbed by mapies, June. Dish cleared nightly, Nov.
1997	4 / 5 (+)	5 / 6 (+)	44 / 52	13 / 15	["(+)" = daily sightings of young by neighbours next door]
1998	10 / 11	9 / 9	12 / 15	9 / 10	Grazing peanut/biscuit; Cat spitting standoff in May
1999	11 / 12	14 / 16	14 / 17	11 / 11	17 April 03.00h, squabble, chased off by white cat
2000	6 / 6	20 / 22	29 / 35	15 / 16	
2001	5 / 5	26 / 35	19 / 25	9 / 9	3 June chased etc.

Interactions with other animals include squirrels, one of which clambered up our brick building when disturbed by a fox investigating peanuts dropped for the squirrel. Generally the squirrels avoid them without problems - just as they elude cats, often with contempt, confident in their wide field of vision, speed, agility - and claws. A young fox recently amused us by perching on the roof corner of a garage building to watch a squirrel, a few metres below, enjoying peanuts from a feeder on a tree trunk - so tantalising! Cats rarely chase a fox and a fox rarely chases a cat. After a noisy face-to-face encounter one night both withdrew without actual aggression.

A neighbour's garden provides a sheltered spot for resting, sunbathing, for juniors to play with or without attendant vixen. A wall about 1.5m high provided a sheltered space when heavily overgrown with ivy, and one summer day Mrs Grist while gardening below was surprised to find a young fox staring down at her through the cover.

One successful vixen, "Stumpy" with half a tail, first seen in 1997, has reared several families, and showed prowess by chasing off the large white cat which is currently dominant among the felines. Stumpy in turn was chased one June night in 2001 at full racing speed along Linfern Road into our garden and vanished through the shrubby hedge. The large pursuing dog appeared but gave up and left with his owner. Stumpy reappeared and giving a series of loud, sharp calls - danger warning? summoning help? She went back through the hedge, but shortly her big mate Tippy" with the

unusually well-marked white tail tip came through, stared down the track, walked back towards the road & onto the corner of the garden wall to survey the scene for a few minutes. Satisfied all was well, he trotted off to forage on his own account. Another episode that year was when Stumpy led her two well-grown offspring up steps onto the garage roof and sat gazing out, apparently to show how this vantage point gave a wide view including the length of Linfern Road. The youngsters gambolled with one another, over and round Stumpy, and eventually all departed. Next morning from the stairs I noticed the two alone on the car park, gazing in opposite directions - "what to do next"? As I descended one strolled off behind our building. The other strolled a short distance in the other direction and watched me with relaxed interest as I emerged and opened our garage. It hesitated about approaching in case I had goodies, but decided not and strolled away. Next night again fox barking was heard in 3 directions - suggesting family contact as the youngsters dispersed.

As in many other urban areas in Britain, foxes have thus become an established part of our local fauna, with a stable population presumably in equilibrium with local resources of food and shelter. In the joint national survey by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Mammal Society in the 1km squares of the Breeding Bird Survey, 45 species of mammal were recorded in 1995-2000 (Newson & Noble, 2002). Over the six years the population of red foxes was stable as the fourth most numerous and widely distributed species: the highest counts were for rabbits (1040), brown hare (526), grey squirrel (460), red fox and roe deer each 227 with the fox more widely distributed.

Reference

Newson, S. & Noble, D. (2002). BBS Mammal Monitoring. *BTO News* 239, 11-12.

Glasgow Naturalist. 2002. Vol 24. Part 1. 96 A RICH BOTANICAL SITE AT LEADHILLS P Macpherson

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Just north of the village of Leadhills, Lanarkshire (VC 77) there is an artificial elongated mound between the road and the burn. It was presumably a slag heap formed when lead was mined in the area. It is approximately 250 yards long and at the north end 25 ft higher than the road but with a 35 ft slope down to the burn. The road rises alongside the mound and is more-or-less at the same level at the southern end. The plateau is 30 yards wide at the north end and 15 yards at the south, and almost horizontal.

On the plateau there are small colonies of Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), Field Gentian (*Gentianella campestris*), and a very small form of Lesser Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum minor* sl) which has not flowered over a four year period. In addition there are the dandelions *Taraxacum argutum* and *T. subnaevosum* (det. A.J. Richards & A.A. Dudman).

Wall Whitlowgrass (*Draba muralis*) is to be found on the stony slopes and Downy Oat-grass (*Helictotrichon pubescens*) on the flat ground at the north end of the mound. All round the area there are carpets of a dwarf form of Water Avens (*Geum rivale*), the subject of a previous report (Macpherson 2000).

It is, therefore, one of the best small sites for rare plants in Lanarkshire.

The Frog Orchid is known from only one other extant site; Moonwort has nine other quadrat records, three of which are on abandoned coal bings; Field Gentian has only one other modern record, a flat area between adjacent coal bings; Lesser Meadow-rue is presumed to be native on rocks at the Falls of Clyde where the plants are much larger; *T. argutum* is the only VC 77 record and *T. subnaevosum* the fourth. Wall Whitlowgrass is currently known only from a railway embankment at Elvanfoot and the Downy Oat-grass from eight quadrants.

Reference

Macpherson, P (2000). Abnormal water avens morphology- lead induced? *Glasgow Naturalist* 23, 53-54.

Glasgow Naturalist. 2002. Vol 24. Part 1. 96-97 LESSER HAIRY-BROME AT THE FALLS OF CLYDE

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In a contract survey of the vegetation of the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) Falls of Clyde Wildlife Reserve, Averts (1997) reported the occurrence of *Zerna* (*Bromopsis*) *benekenii* (Lesser Hairy-brome) on gentle sloping woodland floor and steep banks in the neighbourhood of Corra Castle, Lanarkshire (VC 77).

This plant had not been known there before and its presence in such an area was very surprising as the Falls of Clyde has probably been the most botanised part of Lanarkshire. Further, the SWT reserve has been the subject of a number of previous plant surveys.

In 1999 JW located the site and sent a specimen to a Botanical Society of the British Isles grass referee (RM Payne) who confirmed that it was, indeed, *B. benekenii*. In 2000 a further plant from the site was sent as proof to Prof. CA Stace so that it might be included for the vice-county in the Vice-comital Census Catalogue. This specimen was, in turn, passed on to a brome specialist (LM Spalton) who agreed with the identification.

A search of the surrounding area has since been made (PM & LMDM) and two further colonies discovered which we consider to be *B. benekenii*. At one site of approximately 6x5 metres there were about 20 plants and at a larger one of 14 x 5 m almost 50 were counted. Associated species noted were Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*), Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*). Tufted Hairgrass